

The National Register Looks Toward the Future

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More than 60 people attended the two-day National Register of Historic Places Workshop, March 17-18, in Washington, DC. They included members of the National Register staff, staff of State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), members of State Historic Preservation Review Boards, and representatives from local government historic preservation programs. Sponsored by the National Register, National Park Service, and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, the group convened to explore experiences in using the National Register, streamlining the National Register nomination process, applying technology to expand accessibility to the National Register, and evaluating certain property types.

The discussion generally followed the sequence of recommendations on the National Register program found in the recently completed report, "National Performance Review of the Historic Preservation Fund Partnerships." For the National Register of Historic Places program area, the Historic Preservation Performance Review Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board recommended that the Historic Preservation Fund Partnerships should:

- Redirect NPS, state, and local resources to develop an array of educational products and initiatives using National Register documentation and other sources.
- Redirect the resources of NPS and SHPOs toward building the capability of federal, state, and local governments, and the public to prepare nominations to the National Register.
- Simplify and shorten the processes and requirements at the state and federal levels for nominating properties to the National Register.
- Become a full participant in the "information highway" of the future by making accessible to a wide range of current and potential users the substantial quantity of historic resources information residing with public agencies and private organizations.
- Determine how qualified government entities can be granted authority to list properties in the National Register. If necessary, pursue amendments to the law to accomplish this objective.

Using the National Register in educational activities was the first topic of discussion. The National Register's Teaching with Historic Places has already been the subject of several CRM articles.¹ The group discussed the benefits of using National Register documentation to prepare lesson plans and other instructional materials for students.

Chere Jiusto of the Montana SHPO discussed the state's interpretive sign program where metal signs are awarded to owners of National Register properties. These signs are supported with the state's "bed tax" and the state's tourism department uses the signs in promoting visitation in the State. In addition, owners of National

Register properties in Montana are recognized at preservation awards ceremonies, which are attended by the Governor, who distributes certificates of recognition, and which coincide with meetings of the state legislature. The state legislature funds a preservation program for tribal places. Text for highway interpretive signs on important American Indian properties and specialized workshops are products of the program. In addition, American Indian interns in the state office prepare National Register nominations.

States have developed a variety of methods for disseminating information in National Register nominations after the properties are listed. The Montana SHPO works to get the information into articles, books, teaching materials, and the statewide educational bulletin board. Copies of National Register nomination documentation are routinely provided to historical societies and libraries prior to the State Historic Preservation Review Board meeting on the nomination. Workshop participants cited examples of books, publications, and other media vehicles that resulted from National Register nominations, including county-wide surveys, a catalogue of African American resources, press releases on recently-listed properties, tourism books, and guides to highway markers. The annual Preservation Week and Archeology Week provide opportunities to highlight National Register properties. Staff with the Virginia SHPO combs through real estate advertisements and sends National Register reports to real estate agents. Alaska transcribes oral histories used in National Register research and distributes this material to libraries. The Preservation Alliance of Virginia sponsors regular meetings of owners of National Register properties.

Several states use National Register multiple property documentation as the basis for technical publications. For example, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission recently published *The Whiskey Rebellion: Southwestern Pennsylvania's Frontier People Test the American Constitution* by Jerry A. Clouse (1994), which includes a historic context statement and a guide to the associated sites and remaining buildings. Publications like these provide an opportunity for nomination preparers to receive author credit in the technical publication as well as in the nomination documentation.

Public participation in the National Register process and in preparing National Register nominations is essential to a strong mix of National Register constituents. In some states, such as Ohio, the overwhelming majority of National Register nominations are prepared by members of the public, either interested individuals or from local historical groups.

Elisabeth Potter of the Oregon SHPO described her experience with providing guidance, communication, and reinforcement to non-professionals in preparing National Register nominations. This approach is important in a largely rural state where one National Register staff person in the state office oversees the preparation of between 75 and 100 nominations each year. The statewide special tax assessment program, which was available from 1975 to 1993, generated some of this high volume of nominations. Non-professionals prepare nearly one-third of all nominations, making a user-friendly system for the one-time user of the nomination process a

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prerequisite. While the nomination preparer provides the description of the property and the narrative statement of significance, Potter prepares the maps and provides the synopsis of the property's significance, which is used in the slide presentation to the State Historic Preservation Review Board meeting. In her experience, Potter has noted that the most difficult part of the nomination form for most non-professionals is to evaluate the property in a broad historic context. In some cases, she matches non-professionals with students and interns from area universities and colleges, who can prepare these contexts as part of their academic work.

James W. Steely, Deputy SHPO of Texas, described a National Register nomination as a collection of facts that establish a property's worth for listing in the National Register. To encourage better public understanding of the requirements of the National Register process and the nomination itself, the Texas SHPO has issued policy statements on 1) the process for nominating properties and 2) the process for evaluating and documenting the integrity of properties. It also has outlined minimum requirements for Sections 7 and 8 in order to encourage complete succinct and brief nominations. At some time in the near future, technology can further simplify National Register nominations. For example, scanning and manipulating the images of historic Sanborn maps can help substitute visuals for written narratives.

Devising ways of increasing private and public participation in the National Register program were discussed. The Texas ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991) program will require that sponsors of funded projects with National Register-eligible properties list them within 24 months. This example underscores the desirability of SHPOs working with federal agencies to emphasize the value of listing properties in the National Register and to urge federal agencies to nominate properties in response to the mandate of Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Public agencies involved with environmental compliance work observe that listing of a historic property in the National Register is not an end in itself, but the effects continue well afterward as listing provides access to an expanding set of incentives, grants, and protective measures at all levels of government and serves as a planning and educational tool. It was suggested that programmatic memoranda of agreements under Advisory Council on Historic Preservation procedures include provisions for nominations.

State Historic Preservation Review Boards play a key role in the effort to simplify and shorten the National Register processes and requirements. Review boards should approve nominations that meet minimum National Park Service requirements. They also need to find creative ways to streamline requirements without sacrificing the worth of information in National Register nominations. The National Park Service can assist in this effort by disseminating information on how boards are used or administered throughout the country. Some review boards meet in Certified Local Government locations in order to share experiences with the National Register program.

The connection between the National Register and local planning should be made clearer, according to Bernard Callan of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions. He urged the National Park Service and SHPOs to be more proactive in educating Certified Local Governments about the National Register by delivering information and training to the local level. National Register status affects how local governments plan for listed properties, even if they are not locally designated, because of the financial incentives and protective measures that accompany listing.

Working with universities and colleges on National Register nominations serves both preservation and education efforts because nominations are prepared at low cost and because the students gain experience in undertaking historical research and completing a nomination form. Claudette Stager of the Tennessee SHPO described her office's cooperation with the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University. Local chambers of commerce provide matching grants to MTSU to cover students' travel, photography, and incidental expenses. Robin Bodo of the Delaware SHPO cited the benefits of working with the University of Delaware's Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering: high quality work, academic resources, up-to-date historic contexts, public outreach, and public participation. University of Delaware professor David L. Ames spoke of the mutual commitment of SHPOs and universities to local resources and the cultural landscape as topics of academic inquiry and as universities as sources of technical assistance on preservation matters.

In the area of technology, the workshop participants discussed efforts to convert paper records on survey, inventory, and compliance information into computerized databases to facilitate public access to cultural resource information. Wilson Martin, Deputy SHPO of Utah, urged that the National Register investigate the use of interactive computer technology to facilitate the preparation of National Register nominations. The participants attended demonstrations of the National Park Service's Integrated Preservation Software and its Cultural Resources GIS Facility. These tools assist with the collection, computerization, and accessibility of cultural resources data; with the production of a variety of products from a single data collection effort; and with providing precise locational information in order to better visualize and plan for cultural resources. These tools also allow for links with other computerized databases, such as U.S. Census data, and allow for relationships between cultural and other kinds of resources to be studied.

A discussion of unusual and/or challenging property types, such as those of the recent past and common property types, concluded the workshop. Paul Williams of the U.S. Air Force Legacy Program provided an illustrated talk on Cold War properties. They include camps that provided training for POW status in the USSR, Minuteman silos, nuclear reactors, temporary housing, and bunkers. Paul Diebold of the Indiana SHPO covered the statewide survey of historic aircraft that was facilitated by the database maintained by the state for its tax on aircraft.² This topic was timely because a new National Register Bulletin is being prepared on evaluating and nominating historic aircraft and related facilities to the National Register. David Ames of the University of

Delaware traced the evolution of the American suburb back to the early-19th century, described the metropolitan phenomenon as uniquely American, and portrayed the nation as in a post-suburban era.

John H. Sprinkle, Jr. of Louis Berger & Associates and former acting archeologist for the National Register spoke about the eligibility of archeological properties under Criteria A, B, and C as well as D, and stated that the nomination of archeological properties did not require extensive excavation. Barbara Powers and John Rau of the Ohio SHPO spoke of the ubiquitous neighborhoods of workers' housing in Ohio that date from the state's economic boom between the end of the Civil War and the Great Depression. Although commonplace properties, these enclaves could be identified and evaluated within the context of ethnic history and urban vernacular house types.

Lisa Raflo of the Georgia SHPO described the statewide survey of hundreds of bridges designed according to standardized designs. The state's department of transportation contracted with the SHPO to conduct this work. The development of historic contexts and property type analysis served as useful vehicles for evaluating which bridges appeared to be eligible for the National Register and for developing a management plan for addressing all historic bridges.

Betsy Friedburg of the Massachusetts SHPO described the office's recent experience with reexamining the rural cultural landscape in and around the town of Hadley. A better understanding of the relationship between buildings, the town plans, and the agricultural lands led to the expansion of historic district boundaries and definition of new districts. The effort to encompass the cultural context for the buildings occurred in the boom period of the late 1980s and generated community concern about expanded National Register boundaries. Ultimately, the new boundaries were successfully defended and they now provide an adequate context for interpreting the area's rural enclaves.

At the workshop's conclusion, the participants committed themselves to following up on many of the ideas expressed during the meeting. All noted that the National Register process did not terminate with the listing of properties, but continued long afterward as communities and citizens use National Register listing and registration documentation to achieve broad preservation goals.

Notes

¹ Beth M. Boland, "Our Past/Ourselves: Teaching with Historic Places," In *CRM: Using the National Register of Historic Places*, edited by Antoinette J. Lee and Tanya M. Velt, 33-34, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994. See also Beth M. Boland, "Where Did History Happen?" In *CRM: Teaching With Historic Places*, edited by Beth M. Boland, 1+, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1993.

² Paul C. Diebold, "Aircraft as Cultural Resources: The Indiana Approach," in *CRM* 16 (1993):1, 3-5, 7.

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Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plans Available

The National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places and the National Trust for Historic Preservation have developed an exciting new program, Teaching with Historic Places, which offers classroom-ready lesson plans. These lesson plans:

- use properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places
- link the dramatic story of the place to larger themes in history, social studies, and other subjects
- encourage basic and critical thinking skills
- include activities guiding students to their own community's history
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Lesson plans on diverse topics such as westward expansion and World War II are available from the Preservation Press for \$5.95 per lesson plan plus shipping and handling (orders of five or more lesson plans are discounted 20%).

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